GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:617
ANSWERED ON:20.07.2016
Inhuman Behaviour with Indians Abroad
Dhotre Shri Sanjay Shamrao;Mahtab Shri Bhartruhari;Shewale Shri Rahul Ramesh;Tadas Shri Ramdas Chandrabhanji

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been an increase/ decrease in the cases of exploitation/torture of Indian workers working in other countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof along with the number of such cases reported upon across the world during each of the last three years and the current year, country-wise;

(c) whether the Government has also received complaints about physical and sexual abuse of domestic workers working in other countries during the said period;

(d) if so, the details thereof, country-wise;

(e) whether the Government has taken up the issue with the foreign countries concerned; and

(f) if so, the details and the outcome thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) & (b) Information regarding Indian workers holding ECR Passports, going for overseas employment to 18 notified Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries (Afghanistan, Bahrain, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, North Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Thailand, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen), is maintained by this Ministry. As per information available with the Indian Missions/Posts in ECR countries, there is no general pattern to indicate an increase in cases of exploitation/ torture of Indian workers. Details of complaints received during the last three years and current year are at Annexure.

(c) & (d) Most of the complaints received from Indian workers, including domestic workers, from time to time, are generally in the nature of non-payment/ delayed payment or underpayment of salaries, long working hours, inadequate living conditions, physical harassment, non-renewal of visa and labour card on time, refusal to pay for the medical treatment, denial of leave and air-ticket to the hometown on completion of contract period, forcible custody of Passport and Visa, refusal of leave or 'exit/re-entry permits'/'final exit visa' etc. No specific complaint of sexual abuse has been reported by the Missions.

Such complaints are addressed by the Indian Missions by taking them up with the concerned foreign authorities, Foreign Employers or the officials of the Labour Ministry of that country.

(e) & (f) Whenever the Indian Missions are approached by any Indian national in distress, the same is followed up, at various levels, with the authorities concerned in the Governments of the respective country. In addition, Government of India has signed MoUs with 6 Gulf countries, namely UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. As per these MoUs, the host country will take measures for protection and welfare of the workers in organized sector. The recruitment and terms of employment will be in conformity with the laws of both the countries.

These MOUs are renewed / signed afresh, from time to time, during which process any modifications are duly considered for inclusion.

The Government of India has set up Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) in all the Indian Missions/consulates abroad to meet contingency expenditure incurred by them for carrying out various welfare activities for overseas Indian citizens who are in distress. The objectives of the ICWF include:-

(i) Boarding and lodging for distressed Overseas Indians in need;

(ii) Extending emergency medical care to the Overseas Indians in need;

(iii) Providing air passage to stranded Overseas Indians in need;

(iv) Providing initial legal assistance to the Overseas Indians in deserving cases;

(v) Expenditure on incidentals and for airlifting the mortal remains to India or local cremation/burial of the deceased Overseas Indians in such cases where the sponsor is unable or unwilling to do so as per the contract and the family is unable to meet the cost;

(vi) Providing the payment of penalties in respect of Indian nationals for illegal stay in the host country where prima facie the worker is not at fault;

(vii) Providing the payment of small fines/penalties for the release of Indian nationals in jail/detention centre;

The Ministry has set up a 24X7 Helpline 'Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC)' based in Gurgaon, Haryana which provides information and guidance on all matters and problems pertaining to overseas employment of Indian nationals. Indian Workers Resource Centre (IWRC) set up in Dubai by Embassy of India, in UAE, provides guidance and counseling on all matters pertaining to overseas Indian workers in UAE. Shelter homes for distressed Indian nationals, have been set up in Malaysia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These shelter homes provide free boarding and lodging to overseas Indians in distress pending their repatriation.

Government of India have also started 24x7 online Helpline-'Madad'- for lodging the grievances of the emigrants, which are attended to on priority basis.